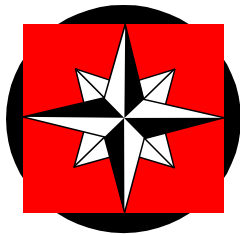


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NAVY MED NAVIGATOR

Comfort's Comforter

*Story and photo by
JOSN Erica Mater
Comfort Public Affairs*

What is an idea? By one dictionary's definition an idea is "something, such as a thought or conception, that potentially or actually exists in the mind as a product of mental activity." Ideas come and go, but then there are those rare occasions when an idea becomes more than just an idea.

On Comfort, one person has turned her idea into a reality.

When Physical Therapist Lt. Paula Godes, MSC, came onboard Comfort in early March she had an idea of making a quilt to document Comfort's experience during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"This is the first time in a long time Comfort has done something of this magnitude and it needed to be recognized," said Godes.

Godes, who has been quilting for ten years, acted on her idea early in her deployment. The second weekend onboard, Godes held the first of many meetings about making a quilt.

At that meeting, Godes along with about 20 other crewmembers discussed the design for the quilt. Godes also put out that everyone onboard could be a part of the idea.

"Anyone who wanted to help with the project could make a 'square' that documented what we did on Comfort during Op-

eration Iraqi Freedom," Godes said.

Surprisingly for Godes, she had a lot of positive feedback.

"In the beginning, I had my doubts about how much participation I would get, but I got a lot of people who were interested in being a part of this project," explained Godes.

A short time into the project, Godes realized that the little amount of fabric she brought with her would be nowhere near enough for this growing project. Fortunately, an online quilting club had heard about the project and asked Godes if there was anything they could do to help. Since that time, Godes and her quilting crew have received over 30 packages of quilting material to help with the project.

"All the fabric we have used was sent to us, and that is what makes this quilt special," said Godes.

According to Godes, everything was coming together nicely and all the pieces were falling into place. That point was made even more apparent when Godes found out that there was another woman onboard Comfort who had brought her sewing machine.

"You know someone is really into quilting and sewing when they bring their sewing machine to a ship," said Godes.

Godes is referring to Lt. Cmdr. Patricia McKay, MC, who is an orthopedic/hand surgeon.

"McKay has played a vital role in this whole process. She has helped out so much and I appreciate it," said Godes.

So far, Godes and her crew have put in over 500 hours into the project,



Lt. Paula Godes, MSC, stands next to the quilt her and many crewmembers have been working on since the middle of March. The quilt represent Comfort efforts during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

and Godes predicts that when it is all said and done, they will have put in over 1000 hours into the piece.

In the center of the quilt, there is a picture of Comfort and above that is a quilted picture of a desert sunset and the words "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Surrounding the centerpiece are 14 quotes embedded into 14 friendship star patterns. The quotes are from several crewmembers onboard who were featured in media articles. The friendship stars represent the close friendships and bonds the crew has formed with each other while on this deployment.

On the outside, there are will be over 40 squares illustrating all aspects of Comfort, including over 500 signatures from crewmembers. These pieces depict almost every department from mental health to the flight deck.

Continued on page 4

Congratulations Petty Officers!



The following were advanced to the rank of Petty Officer 3rd Class in a ceremony May 26. From left to right: front row; HM3 Lynley Bastien, HM3 Ruth Farmer, HM3 Jennifer Hattrich, MS3 Sahenia Molden, HM3 Pamela Medrano, HM3 Kailolaine Hokafonu, HM3 Audrey Bowers, HM3 Leslye Thompson, HM3 Latoya Carter, Back row; HM3 Paul Manansala, HM3 Matthew Moritz, HM3 Shaun Jeffrey, HM3 Christopher Blake, HM3 Elias CruzMendez, HM3 John Holloman, HM3 Anthony Falasco, HM3 Jason Beach, HM3 Emil Fabian, and HM3 James Abdale. Not pictured is HM3 Gabriel Uriquidez.



The following were advanced the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class in a ceremony May 26, From left to right: front row; HM2 Tracey Lewis, HM2 Cecilio Smailling, HM2 Benoit Dagadu, SH2 Dominick Asare, HM2 Alfred Ibinyopaka, DT2 Lenora Journigan, Back Row; MS2 Kareefe Belton, SH2 Marco Hidalgo, SK2 Ronald Miller, OS2 Amal Lee, and HM2 Alicia Davis.

Advancements and Awards



The following were promoted to the rank of Petty Officer First Class in a ceremony May 26. From left to right: front row; MA1 Juan Rivera, MM1 Wille Sheppard, HM1 Frank Zanolini, back row; SK1 James Welch, IT1 Carlos Acevedo, and MS1 Joseph Scatina.

The following were meritoriously promoted to the next rank for the outstanding performance onboard Comfort during a ceremony May 26. From left to right: front row; HM2 Tracey Lewis, DT2 Lenora Journigan, HM3 Leslye Thompson, back row; HM3 Gabriel Uriquidez, HM3 Jason Beach, and MS1 Joseph Scatina.



The following were awarded their Enlisted Surface Warfare qualification in a ceremony May 26. From left to right; HM1 Frank Zanolini, HM2 Cecilio Smailing, and SH2 Marshall Ramsey.

Chaplain's Corner

Memorial Day

LCDR Mark Koczak
Command Chaplain

Some of us are old enough to remember the old Memorial Day, 30 May. Before the Monday holidays, I remember all of the old national holidays from when I was in grade school. Memorial Day for me is always connected to the Navy first and then to my own family.

My first Memorial Days were spent with my father and godfather, now a retired Master Chief Hospital Corpsman, at Arlington National Cemetery. My godfather's young son was buried there. President Kennedy's grave was new and we walked the long rows of white stones with flags set in honor of all those buried there. This created a long lasting impression on me about all of the people that served in the military. To this day, my personal feelings about duty and honor come from that time when I was a little boy walking with these two tall sailors.

Now almost forty years later, I continue to visit Arlington Cemetery and a state Veteran's Cemetery outside of Baltimore. The long rows and flags are still present and constant. The remembrance of service and duty and sacrifice is now stronger. As a Navy Chaplain I have done funerals in many cemeteries for veterans. These two places, close to home, are very special to me. My father's ashes are interred at Arlington and my father-in-law, a six-year World War II USCG veteran and his wife are buried in Baltimore.

On this day, the old Memorial Day, we are all called as Americans and especially those who continue on active duty, to remember those who have gone before us. They are our brothers and sisters who have served. Now their memory seems a little different, more focused, after where we have been and what we have done over the last five months. We are now apart of Navy tradition.

There are many Veterans cemeteries scattered through out the United States, both federal and state. Take a few hours one day when you are on leave and stop by. I will be visiting them again and saying a prayer and remembering.

Change of Office



Photo by HM2 James Royal

In a ceremony June 1, Master Chief Petty Officer Jude Adams (left) turned over the position of Command Master Chief to Master Chief Petty Officer Ronald Kunz.

QUILT, from page 1

Some are simple while others are more extensive. Either way, Godes believes the quilt will be a lasting reminder of what Comfort and the crew did in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"In a year, articles will be thrown away and forgotten, but the quilt will remain," said Godes.

There will also be four American flags and in the white stripes will be all the statistics that were collected during Operation Iraqi Freedom, including how many surgeries were done, and how many pounds of supplies and food were used.

Godes plans on having the quilt 90 percent completed by the time Comfort pulls into Baltimore. Godes envisions having the quilt completed and ready to present by the first of September. The reason it will take so long is because it will be hand quilted instead of by a machine.

"I was originally going to machine sew the quilt, but because of the significance we decided to quilt it by hand," Godes said. "Quilts are most beautiful when they are hand quilted."

When the quilt is finished, it will not hang onboard Comfort. Instead, Godes would like to see it displayed at Bethesda for about a year before putting it on permanent display at a military museum.

"I am very proud of this project," said Godes. "I believe that medical people are the unsung heroes and what we do is very hard. This is a tribute to them."

This quilt has been two and a half months in the making. It is a scrapbook in fabric and is more than just the efforts of Comfort's crew. Each piece that is sewn with another piece symbolizes how everyone came together to accomplish our mission. The quilt itself represents a blanket of warmth and comfort.

What was supposed to be a modest commemoration of Comfort has turned into something that could be a part of history forever. What was originally going to be a little piece of fabric has turned into a quilt too big to hang on any of Comfort's bulkheads. What started as an idea has blossomed into a reality.